

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

POLICIES FOR TEACHING ASSISTANTS/TEACHING FELLOWS

TEACHING ASSISTANTS

These appointments are typically given to students who have not yet earned a M.S. degree or equivalent. TA assignments may involve assisting an instructor who is teaching a course, teaching a lab section or recitation, or performing other duties as needed. A full-time TA is expected to devote 20 hours/week to teaching-related activities

Teaching Assistants are generally supervised by the instructor of the course in which they assist. The exact nature of the TA's responsibilities varies with the particular course. Usually, a TA helps in constructing and grading examinations, preparing classroom demonstrations, and holding office hours to answer student questions. Occasionally, a TA may prepare and deliver a class lecture. Instructors who are assigned TAs are required to (a) report in writing to the Assistant Chair on the effectiveness of the TA's performance and (b) provide feedback to the TA on his/her strengths and weaknesses.

TEACHING FELLOWS

These appointments are typically given to advanced students who are working on the Ph.D. degree. Teaching Fellows assume full responsibility for their courses. Prior to becoming Teaching Fellows, many graduate students serve as Teaching Assistants. In addition, students are encouraged to prepare for teaching by attending lectures given by faculty, engaging in informal discussions about teaching with faculty and senior students, and delivering guest lectures in undergraduate courses. A full-time TF is expected to devote 20 hours/week to teaching-related activities

Teaching advisor: The Assistant Chair will appoint a faculty teaching advisor in consultation with the student and faculty.

Teaching seminar: All new TFs are required to register for a teaching seminar either during the term prior to their first TF assignment or during the term of their first assignment. The Fall seminar is Teaching Psychology 2970, and the Spring seminar is Faculty Development 2200.

Teaching responsibilities: The TF, after consulting with the faculty advisor, is responsible for (a) notifying the department secretary of which textbooks to order and placing relevant material on reserve at the Langley Library; (b) preparing a course syllabus, which specifies the requirements of the course and is available for distribution at the first class meeting (sample syllabi are available from faculty advisors and the Assistant Chair); (c) being on time to class and arranging a substitute if unable to attend; (d) maintaining office hours on two different days and preferably at two different times (not "by appointment only"); (e) grading accurately and fairly; and (f) posting grades as soon as possible after an examination (one-week maximum, unless holidays intervene); (g) submitting grade rosters and other required forms by the University deadlines..

Secretarial services and supplies: The TF is responsible for adhering to departmental rules concerning the use of secretarial services, supplies, and equipment.

Faculty supervision: All new TFs are responsible for making arrangements for their faculty advisor to observe their teaching at least once, and preferably more often, during the term. An alternative is to arrange to videotape a class and then review the tape later with the faculty advisor. The Office of Faculty Development will videotape a class if the TF requests it.

Feedback from Advisor: The new TF should meet with the faculty advisor to obtain feedback.

Evaluation: All TFs must have their course(s) evaluated by their students, using the form administered by the Office of Measurement and Evaluation of Teaching (OMET). These evaluations must be turned in to the Assistant Chair. In addition, TFs must arrange to meet with their faculty advisor to review the course evaluation.

CRITERIA FOR MAKING TA/TF ASSIGNMENTS

Important factors in making TA/TF assignments include area of graduate training, content area of the course to be taught, and quality of academic progress. Generally, students are not allowed to teach courses in areas where they have not had graduate level preparation. Students who have a GPA of less than 3.0 are not eligible for TA/TF assignments.

Students should not expect TA/TF support after the second term of their fifth year of graduate study. (A leave of absence does not count as graduate study.) Students beyond the fifth year may receive TA/TF support, depending on the department's teaching needs and the availability of appropriate courses. In general, students beyond the fifth year who have taught a course will have lower priority for teaching support than will more junior students.

Summer support for TAs and TFs is quite limited. The Graduate Education Committee developed the following guidelines for allocation of TA/TF summer assignments: (1) Priority for summer funding will be inversely related to the student's seniority in the graduate program. Thus, first year students who do not have other support will be given the highest priority for summer funding. It is expected, however, that many first year students will have research support (GSR) for their first summer term. To the extent support is available after the needs of first year students are satisfied, second year students will have the highest priority, then third years students, and so on. (2) Students who had an overload of support (e.g. greater than 1.0 TA/TF or 1.0 GSR) during the fall and/or spring terms will have lower priority for summer funding than will students who did not have extra support during these terms..

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M. J. MOSKOWITZ GRADUATE STUDENT TEACHING AWARD

In the Spring of each year, the Department reviews all of its teaching fellows for a teaching award made possible by an endowment created by Merle Moskowitz for this purpose. In recent years, the value of the award, which is based upon income from the endowment, has been approximately \$500. The recipient is selected by a three member faculty committee which includes the chair.

Guidelines for selecting the awardee:

1. The award is made to a psychology graduate student who is, or was, a Teaching Fellow and who has not previously received the award.
2. The TF should have had complete responsibility for a three or four credit course or a two to four hour per week writing lab. Past recipients have taught more than once and many have taught two or more different courses.
3. In case of equal qualifications, the more senior student generally receives the award, but the department may choose to make more than one award and divide the amount of the award equally.
4. Student evaluations will provide a major source of information about teaching, but reliable informal evaluations may also be used.